



**COLORADO DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH AND
ENVIRONMENT**

WATER QUALITY CONTROL DIVISION

Radionuclide Public Education Program Guidance

Water systems having enforcement orders for exceeding a maximum contaminant level (MCL) for radionuclides and requiring installation of treatment are encouraged implement a public education program to educate consumers about the need for, and benefits of, installing a drinking water treatment process for the removal of radionuclides.

The water system should develop a public education program strategic plan to ensure that the education effort is effective and successful, and meets the needs of consumers. This plan and all written public education materials should be submitted to the Division for review and approval. To accomplish this goal, the system will need to determine the level of awareness among the system's public and other important stakeholders about the need to construct a new water treatment plant, the current perceptions of the existing water system and the issues surrounding the new plant, and the communications mechanisms that would be the most effective to educate and communicate with customers about the issue. Identification of key stakeholders (e.g., water customers, civic organizations, business associations, business leaders, higher education institutions, large customers such as hospitals, penal institutions, etc., senior citizen organizations, churches, etc.) is essential to developing an effective plan.

Content of written public education materials.

The water system should include the following elements in printed materials (e.g., brochures and pamphlets, and websites). Any additional information presented by a water system should be consistent with the information below and be in plain language clearly understood by the general public. Water systems should submit all written public education materials to the Division for review and approval prior to delivery.

Consistent with the Public Notification and the Consumer Confidence Report Rules, the following required language should be used except for the information in brackets that the system must insert:

IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT [CONTAMINANT(S)] IN YOUR DRINKING WATER.

[INSERT NAME OF WATER SYSTEM] has elevated levels of [CONTAMINANT] in drinking water. [CONTAMINANT] can cause serious health problems when ingested over a long period of time. *[Add all of the following statements that apply to your system.]*

- Radium: Some people who drink water containing radium –226 or -228 in excess of the Maximum Contaminant Level (MCL) over many years may have an increased risk of getting cancer.
- Gross Alpha: Some people who drink water containing alpha emitters in excess of the MCL over many years may have an increased risk of getting cancer.
- Uranium: Exposure to uranium in drinking water may result in toxic effects to the kidney. Some people who drink water containing alpha emitters in excess of the MCL over many years may have an increased risk of getting cancer.

Please read this information closely to see what you can do to reduce [CONTAMINANT] in your drinking water.

Additional required information:

1. Health effects of [CONTAMINANT].
2. Explain sources of [CONTAMINANT] in drinking water.
3. Explain what [CONTAMINANT] is and how it affects human health.
4. Discuss the steps the consumer can take to reduce exposure to [CONTAMINANT] in drinking water (e.g., using water from an alternative source known to be low in [CONTAMINANT], such as bottled water).
5. Explain that boiling water does not reduce [CONTAMINANT] levels.
6. Suggest that anyone with specific health concerns consult a medical professional for advice.
7. Explain what the water system is doing to bring the system into compliance with the [CONTAMINANT] maximum contaminant level.

8. For more information call us at [INSERT YOU NUMBER] [(IF APPLICABLE), visit our Web site at [INSERT YOUR WEB SITE HERE]]. For more information on [CONTAMINANT], visit EPA's Web site at <http://www.epa.gov/safewater/radionuclides/basicinformation.html>.

Delivery of public education materials.

For public water systems serving a large proportion of non-English speaking consumers, the public education materials must contain information in the appropriate language(s) regarding:

- The importance of the notice.
- A telephone number or address where people served may contact the water system to obtain a translated copy of the public educational materials or to request assistance in the appropriate language.

Public education tasks:

1. Develop and implement a strategic communication/public education plan.
2. Deliver printed materials meeting the content requirements to all bill-paying customers. As long as a system has an open enforcement order for exceeding the [CONTAMINANT] MCL, it must repeat the public education tasks at least annually.
3. Make a good faith effort to locate all potentially affected customers and users (such as, higher education institutions, hospitals, penal institutions, schools, apartment complexes, businesses, etc.), and to identify their interests, concerns, and informational needs.
4. Post material meeting the content requirements on the water system's Web site, if available.
5. In addition, systems must implement at least three (3) activities from one or more categories listed below. The educational content and selection of these activities must be determined through interviews conducted to develop the public education strategy, and in consultation with the Department.
 - a. Public Service Announcements.
 - b. Paid advertisements.

- c. Post informational posters/displays on [CONTAMINANT] in drinking water in a public place or common area in office buildings, schools, restaurants, motels, hospitals, clinics, prisons, etc.
- d. E-mails to customers.
- e. Public Meetings.
- f. Household Deliveries.
- g. Targeted Individual Customer Contact.
- h. Direct material distribution to all multi-family homes and institutions.
- i. Other methods identified by stakeholders and approved by the Department.

Public Education Program Strategic Plan

Strategic Planning is a management tool that provides a disciplined approach to produce an organization's decisions and actions. The following is a template for a Public Education Program Strategic Plan:

Public Education Program Strategic Plan

[Insert Project Name]

[Insert Date or Update Date]

I. Strategy Coordinator

[Insert project coordinator contact name, title, phone number, and email address]

[Insert other contacts, as appropriate]

II. Issue/Action

[Insert a short, succinct definition of the issue or action that is being addressed with this communication strategy]

EXAMPLE

The system is out of compliance due to elevated levels of radionuclides in the drinking water supply and needs to engage stakeholders in discussing options to address the situation.

III. Background

[Briefly describe why this is an issue and history of how the situation evolved.]

EXAMPLE

Uranium is a ubiquitous component of Colorado's geology resulting in areas with high levels of radionuclides in groundwater. The system is out of compliance and has been struggling to meet Colorado Primary Drinking Water Regulations. In 2007, the system volunteered to participate in the Colorado Radionuclide Abatement and Disposal Strategy (CO-RADS). The program is designed to help participating systems identify feasible compliance options and funding mechanisms for system improvements that will provide safe drinking water for system users.

IV. Identify Stakeholders

[List those having a stake in the outcome of the effort]

EXAMPLES

- *System operators*
- *System users*
- *City/County Commissioners*
- *Local health departments*
- *Special interest groups*
- *Civic organizations*
- *Business associations*
- *Business leaders*
- *Higher education institutions*
- *Large customers (such as hospitals, penal institutions, etc.)*
- *Senior citizen organizations*
- *Churches*

V. Stakeholder Concerns to Date

Concerns Voiced To Date: *[Based on current information, summarize known concerns, keeping in mind that this section will be updated as more information is obtained.]*

EXAMPLE

- *Some users want to know what health effects may result from drinking water from the system over the past 20 years*
- *Others don't believe there is a problem and that treating the water is a waste of time and money*
- *Some want to know why they need to treat water that is used for livestock and gardening*
- *Some say costs for treatment and disposal are too high*

VI. Goals of this Strategy

[List goals of this risk communication/outreach strategy]

EXAMPLE

- *To gather information directly from affected users about understanding of the issues and their concerns*
- *To provide timely and accurate information to users regarding their drinking water*
- *To identify opportunities for collaborative identification of problems and solutions*

VII. Constraints

[List possible hurdles to implementing the public education program, such as organizational changes, funding, trust levels, public perception, leadership support, relations with media, past performance, etc.]

EXAMPLE

- *Public does not perceive a problem*
- *System serves a minimal number of taps*
- *Funding is limited*

VIII. Approach

[In addition to the required delivery of printed materials to all bill-paying customers, outline approach to implement this strategy; can be broken into phases].

EXAMPLE

- *Conduct interviews with key stakeholders*
- *Analyze information collected during interviews*
- *Identify effective educational and communication methods; may include, but not be limited to:*
 - *Public Service Announcements.*
 - *Paid advertisements.*
 - *Post informational posters/displays on [CONTAMINANT] in drinking water in a public place or common area in office buildings, schools, restaurants, motels, hospitals, clinics, prisons, etc.*
 - *E-mails to customers.*
 - *Presentations to Organizations*
 - *Household Deliveries.*
 - *Targeted Individual Customer Contact.*
 - *Direct material distribution to all multi-family homes and institutions.*

- *Other methods identified by stakeholders during interviews, and approved by the Division.*

IX. Action Plan

[list specific actions, responsibilities, coordination, and timing to implement this risk communication strategy]

Activity	Responsibility	Timing
<i>List activities needed to implement strategy</i>	<i>Designate person responsible</i>	<i>Insert date</i>

EXAMPLE:

(i.e., Starting date is the date of the meeting developing the action plan, for example December 1.)

Activity	Responsibility	Timing
<i>Conduct interviews with users</i>	<i>Board members/Council members</i>	<i>Within 10 days (i.e. December 10)</i>
<i>Analyze understanding of issues and customer concern, and identify effective communication approaches</i>	<i>Board members/Council members</i>	<i>Within 30 days (i.e. January 1)</i>
<i>Establish mailing/email list</i>	<i>Board Secretary/Council Secretary</i>	<i>Within 30 days (i.e. January 1)</i>
<i>Develop informational materials</i>	<i>System operator; CDPHE</i>	<i>Within 30 days (i.e. January 1)</i>
<i>Distribute informational materials via identified mechanisms</i>	<i>System operator; Board members</i>	<i>Within 60 days (i.e. February 1)</i>
<i>Meet with users</i>	<i>System operator; local public health rep; CDPHE</i>	<i>Within 75 days (i.e., February 15)</i>
<i>Establish advisory group</i>	<i>Local public health rep; system operator; city/county</i>	<i>TBD</i>